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SUBJECT: TFGG01: FRENCH VIEW OSCE MONITORS IN GEORGIA AS
EMERGENCY STEP ONLY

REF: STATE 89769

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On August 21, French Elysee Advisor Boris Boillon and MFA A/S for Eurasia Roland Galharague, who traveled with FM Kouchner to the region, provided us with a consistent interpretation of the arrival of OSCE monitors: the new monitors are responding to the emergency situation; they are not the new international mechanism referred to in point 5 and do not prejudice the eventual international arrangements. Galharague welcomed refotel demarche. Pol M-C emphasized the need for Russia to respect its commitments to retreat, and encouraged active consideration of what will happen on August 22 if Russian forces have not fully withdrawn. Post will remain seized of these and related questions in the days to come. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On August 21, French Elysee Advisor Boris Boillon (Middle East advisor with acting responsibility for this portfolio) explained that the arrival of the OSCE monitors in the coming days are part of the security measures mentioned in point 5 of the six point document, but only in the sense of meeting the immediate emergency. The 500 Russians who will continue their patrols will be in contact with (work with) the OSCE monitors and others, undefined, in the zone. But this is just a preliminary measure to meet the urgent conditions. There still needs to be an international discussion to find an international mechanism to put in place. Until then, these other temporary measures will be needed to meet the emergency.

¶3. (C) Later on August 21, MFA A/S-equivalent for Eurasia and the Balkans Roland Galharague described the coming days as critical and decisive for the situation in Georgia as well as relations with Russia. Whether this crisis is a "one-off" for Russia or the beginning of a new dynamic is not yet fully clear. France's current goal is to advance the political process for implementation of the Sarkozy-brokered six-point plan. He said that beyond a long-term stop to hostilities and a Russian retreat, the key priority is establishing international arrangements as soon as possible to deny Russia a pretext for maintaining its presence in Georgia. Galharague stated that the EU GAERC conclusions created a mandate to pursue a UN Security Council Resolution, but that France is further motivated to pursue one due to the belief that it would create the best basis for protecting Georgian interests. In order to implement point 5 of the cease-fire, one and only one "international mechanism" is needed, and one to which Russia is not a third party.

14. (C) Galharague said the French Mission to the UN is working on a revised draft UNSCR today that would cite in extenso the six-point plan and refer to an international mechanism. To establish more clarity on the ground in Georgia as quickly as possible, existing mandates such as the OSCE monitoring one should be taken advantage of, and can be followed by missions that first require new mandates. Both our current ground information and the signs coming from the Russian government are contradictory and often unverifiable. It is not clear whether they are taking steps to withdraw by the 22nd. He said the primary European and Allied interest is to establish a new international dynamic permitting the rest of the international community to regain some control over Russia's actions. He said France had not established any concrete benchmarks for Russia's retreat from Georgia, in the belief that more flexibility meant more opportunity to exert political pressure on Russia. He noted that Russia's goal would be to consolidate their positions while changing their force posture to "peacekeeping" mode. Regarding France's definition of point 5, he referred us to President Sarkozy's letter stating that while awaiting an international mechanism, Russian forces can remain in the immediate proximity of South Ossetia. He reiterated the need for a UNSCR, this time to replace the 1992 cease-fire agreement (and a 1999 understanding) that Russia currently uses as its point of reference for "500 troops" and to give the international community more flexibility. He pointed out that the same 1990,s agreements posit a similar number of Georgian and South Ossetian patrols, and noted that,s obviously a mandate Georgia can,t fulfill now and another reason to supercede it. He said that a strengthened OSCE

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monitoring mission would be due to urgency only, and would not prejudice the political process or the eventual international arrangements for long-term resolution. COMMENT: Galharague's interpretation was fully consistent with what we heard from Boillon shortly beforehand. END COMMENT.

15. (C) Regarding the EU's role, Galharague said that whether a European Council might be convened would depend on developments. He said there was more consensus than expected at the GAERC, as France had not planned to issue conclusions. He said the EU has a consistent objective to gain more control of Russia's actions in the international arena, and that that shared basis for action would remain unanimous.

16. (C) Galharague hypothesized that Russia's strategy for Georgia was to produce "Kosovo in reverse," only accelerated, with Saakashvili in the role of Milosevic, Russia in the role of NATO, etc. However, he said it was too early to speculate about whether the crisis in Georgia was just "tit for tat" for Kosovo. He said in his view, Russia viewed the situation as a "win-win" - regardless of the outcome of the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia has had its revenge for Kosovo. He noted that Russia will have more presence and operate "more easily" in a more tense international climate. Galharague welcomed reftel demarche, while expressing interest in further information regarding U.S. strategy in the crisis, including at the UN. Pol M-C emphasized the need for Russia to respect its commitments to retreat, and encouraged active consideration of what will happen on August 22 if Russian forces have not fully withdrawn.

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